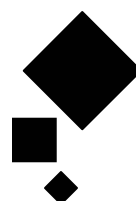




United Way
of New York City



Seedco
*Innovations in Community
Development*

FOOD CARD ACCESS PROJECT FCAP E-NEWSLETTER

Date of Issue: January 2005

Happy New Year!!

The FCAP E-Newsletter is a monthly bulletin that provides FCAP CBOs with updates on policies and procedures, performance progress, and Food Stamps information. The E-Newsletter serves as a forum for FCAP partners and CBOs to share best practices, celebrate successes and address program challenges.

Now accepting E-Newsletter contributions and ideas for news items, success stories, questions, and strategies for 2005 editions. Send to Nathan McNeil (nmcneil@seedco.org).

Special Issue: 2004 in Review

Thank you for helping to make 2004 a successful year for the Food Card Access Project!



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

In 2004, the following Outreach Specialists each identified and pre-screened at least 500 clients eligible for the Food Card:

Polly Betancourt, CAB
Elba Luna, CAB
Emma Lopez, RBSCC
Duvale McKnight, HCCI
Maria Salinas, SCS
Charles Leung, CPC
Maria Garcia, CAB
Angel del Orbe, SCS

Congratulations!

PM&MSM: FCAP ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2004

In 2004, FCAP . . .

- Reached **65,978** individuals through direct outreach!
- Reached up to **22,465** through flyer distribution
- Prescreened **14,643** households for Food Stamp eligibility
- Found **11,888** client households, representing **27,000** individuals, to be eligible for Food Stamps
- Provided Application Assistance for **10,846** client households
- Identified **267** new prescreening sites

FCAP NEWS

CHINESE-AMERICAN PLANNING COUNCIL TOPS FCAP PUSH COMPETITION!

All CBOs responded impressively to the call to turn a generally slow time of year for outreach into one of FCAP's most successful months to date. While the competition was very close, the team from the Chinese American Planning Council of Suzy Zhou, Charles Leung, Fannie Liu, Ivana Wong, and Paul Chan increased their prescreening average 45% and increased their follow-ups average by 93% during the Push period to win the competition. Congratulations to CPC and thanks to everyone for going the extra mile!

UWNYC THROWS A GREAT PARTY FOR FCAP !

Thanks to everyone who was able to join us for the FCAP end of the year party at UWNYC. We were honored to have UWNYC President and CEO, Lawrence Mandell, join us for this special occasion. We hope everyone had a great time eating, drinking, and catching up with friends and colleagues!

THE YEAR IN FCAP STRATEGIES: BEST PRACTICES OF 2004

General

- *Think outside the box*, be unconventional and open minded!
- *Be resourceful and proactive in your approach*. Don't wait for potential clients to come to you – go find them.
- *Be flexible – cater to the target audience*. Listen to each client and give him/her the most accurate information for his/her situation.
- *Be personable!* Build relationships, both with individuals and with community organizations and their clients.
- *Make the Food Stamps Issue “Real” for Clients*: Humanize the need for Food Stamps and create a level of comfort with the potential client by inquiring about the needs of their children. For example, if you see a potential client with a child, ask the individual how many children they have; ask if the child is signed up for Food Stamps. If the individual responds positively to your questions, there is a good chance that you will be able to engage them in a prescreening and help them to acquire Food Stamps.
- *Importance of Local Relationships*: We know that CBOs are aware of the importance of their unique ties to the communities they serve: clients from within the CBO catchment area are more likely to follow through with their Food Stamp application and receive Food Stamps, than clients who live outside the catchment area. This speaks to the importance of the CBO relationships with local Food Stamp centers and of the value of appointments. It also emphasizes a CBO's ability to positively influence community residents!
- *Tie up Loose Ends Before a Vacation*: Be sure to synchronize your computer as the last thing you do before leaving for vacation – don't let client records languish on your laptop, which could prevent the client from getting the assistance they need and prevent supervisors and training coordinators from running up-to-date and accurate reports.

Documentation

- *To Better Help Your Clients through the Application Process*: Examine your client's actual required documents - for example, a passport or original social security card. Clients may not always understand what listed documents are; seeing the actual documents is helpful in getting them to understand what they need to submit.

- *Have clients keep a paper trail of all documents given to HRA:* Sometimes documents that clients give to Food Stamp centers are lost. Clients should have copies of everything they give to the centers so that they can provide them again if there is a problem and (in case advocacy is needed) so that FCAP can show precisely what documents were given to HRA. Clients should also try to get a receipt for documents that are exchanged (for example, center workers might date and stamp “received” on document request forms once our clients bring in missing documents). If any documents are mailed, it is best to use certified mail. If documents are faxed, the client should save the fax confirmation sheet.

Outreach and Site Development

- *Focus on communication with your prescreening site contact:*
 - Is s/he aware of the exact day and time of the visit?
 - Is an area established where you will be able to work? Are chairs and tables available?
 - Does the site have fliers and posters to advertise for the event beforehand?
- *Don't Forget the Visuals:* When prescreening at a site, ensure that your setup area is visually appealing and clearly indicates why you are there. Post banners and posters where they can be seen clearly; Arrange flyers and pamphlets neatly. The small things will attract clients if done right, but may repel clients if ignored!
- *Have a Site's Reception Work for You:* If you are at a site with a reception desk, be sure to ask them to tell people about FCAP services and refer them to your prescreening area.
- *Sharpen your Outreach Strategy – Ask More Questions:* Every time you prescreen a client, include as much information as possible about how the client heard about FCAP. This will help to identify successful outreach locations and inform future outreach.
- *Have Satisfied Clients Spread the Word:* When a past client comes to you to let you know that they are now receiving Food Stamps, put them to work (if they seem willing!). Give the client a handful of flyers and ask them to tell their friends and family about FCAP and the Food Stamp Program.
- *Seek Out New Resources for Information:*
 - *Use Expert Community Members:* Shop managers and owners, Senior Center directors, and others have often lived and worked in your community for years, and may have detailed knowledge of that community - call on their expertise, and ask what they think the ideal site for outreach and prescreening would be, and how they would reach that community's underserved populations.
 - *Use Community Residents:* Visitors to community resource centers may be able to help you reach more people! Ask visitors where other centers are located and what days and times they operate. Some locations may have slipped under our radar - these community residents may hold the key to unlocking sites FCAP has not yet identified!
 - *Hold Strategy Sessions:* Every FCAP outreach specialist and site supervisor is an expert on many aspects of their target community. Hold strategy sessions to share information

about outreach strategies, the follow-up process, and potential sites, both informally and formally.

- *Slow Sites – Redistribute Your Time:* If you find that a site is particularly slow on a given day, use that time to conduct follow-up on clients that have already been pre-screened (if you have access to a phone).

Follow-Up

- *Your client can help you with Follow-Up:* Your client knows more about their own situation than anyone else – enlist their help in completing your follow-up:
 - Ask the client to remember and write down the dates and addresses of their appointments, the Food Stamp center employees they worked with and any other information that you will be asking them about in your follow-up;
 - Find out when the best time to reach them will be;
 - Ask the client to call you with any updates on their Food Stamp status.
- *Space Your Follow-Up:* To get the most possible information about your client, contact them several weeks apart for each follow-up. This will give them time to complete the necessary steps towards acquiring food stamps and will ensure that you have new, useful information to include in each follow up entry.
- *Follow up with a client at least three times:* the day of their interview (to ensure they attend), 1 week after the interview (to find out how it went), and 30 days later (to find out if they received a working Food Card). Remember, if it is an expedited client you should follow-up within 5 days! Always attempt to reach each client on different days and at different times. If, in the end, you are unable to reach a client over the phone, contact them by mail.
- Be clear, concise, and discrete on phone messages.
- *Host a “Follow-up Night”:* Organize a time when all outreach workers can stay into the evening and contact as many clients as possible. Make it fun by ordering in a meal.
- *If you think a client’s case may need advocacy:* document all barriers in follow-up, gather all necessary documentation, double-check initial prescreening information, and then refer the case to your Supervisor.

Advocacy

- *Have clients sign in as soon as they arrive at a Food Stamp center:* Some clients are illegally turned away from Food Stamp centers. It helps us advocate on their behalf if they have signed in to the log book at the Food Stamp center so they have a record of being there.
- *Inform Clients of their Rights:*
 - *Clients without Income:* Many of our clients are being turned away at Food Stamp centers because they have no income and told to apply for PA. Advise clients who have no income that they DO have the right to apply for Food Stamps, and that they do not have to apply for public assistance if they do not want to.

- *Non-English speaking clients:* These clients have the right to speak with someone who speaks their language or have translation assistance. Each NPA center has a language liaison whose job it is to make sure that everyone's needs are met. HRA workers can use a language phone bank when no one is available to speak our clients' language. In addition, our clients have the right to documents in their own language.

PRESCREENER HIGHLIGHT: QUOTABLES

Charles Leung, Chinese-American Planning Council

Cultivate Passion! I believe it is the passion that drives the project and all of us. And that the passion is not just a bam of emotion - it is the energy, the determination, the knowledge and the force to make a difference for people's lives in times of urgency, as well as in times of growth. It is vital for us to devote ourselves to this meaningful and powerful project, striving for excellence in vision, mission, and action along the way with passion and knowledge.

Maria Garcia, Citizen's Advice Bureau

Put your Interpersonal Skills to Work! Provide service to clients in a friendly manner while maintaining professional boundaries. Use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the service. Clients have the right to refuse or withdraw. Give the client the opportunity to ask questions. As a worker, explore your own attitudes and eliminate those beliefs that make it difficult for you to make contact with those who need your help. Write ideas in your journal of how you can use your interests and talents in the service of others in your community. Feel positive about yourself and project that feeling to the clients. Clients will be comfortable with your help and you will do a better job and more people will get Food Stamps.

Aidee Reyes, Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council

Use your persuasive techniques! Sometimes I have a client who qualifies for a small amount of food stamps (like \$10) and they want to decline the services. I give them an example of a grocery list that could fill their basket: they can buy a two cans of beans for \$1, one bag of rice for \$1.19, dozen eggs 99 cents, chicken for \$3.50, wonder bread for 99 cents, \$1.49 for a quart of milk, and you still have 84 cents left over to buy some mixed vegetables. For one person you can you could eat two meals a day for a week! Some people realize that it's more than they have right now and they decide that they want to apply.

Angel del Orbe, Sunnyside Community Services

Do your follow ups! Also, try not to become a 'barrier' to your client by being rude and inflexible. Keep spreading the Food Stamp gospel!